

August 31, 2005

The Honorable Rya W. Zobel
United States District Court
John Joseph Moakley U.S. Courthouse
1 Courthouse Way
Boston, MA 02210

Dear Judge Zobel,

My name is Debbie Paiva and I am writing this commendation in support of Carla Paiva. I am married to Carla's brother, Paul. I have known Carla since 1988 when she was 14 years old.

Carla had a very difficult childhood. She was abused as a child and was placed in foster care at a very young age. Two years after I met Carla, she got pregnant with Russell. After she gave birth to Russell, Carla tried to go back to school so that she could support her son. Right away, Russell's father was out of the picture and Carla was left to raise Russell as a single mom.

Carla and Russell do not have a typical relationship. Although Russell is a teen-aged boy with ADHD, he is never defiant or rude to his mother. Carla has always provided a stable home to Russell. Carla constantly pushes Russell to achieve in school despite the limitations that he experiences because of his ADHD. When Carla saw that Russell was not responding well to the public school system in Fall River, she decided to send Russell to the local charter school. Russell eventually settled in well at the charter school and began to make friends and do better work in school. Carla donated her time to various groups affiliated with Russell's school, like the parent teacher organization, because she wanted so much for her son to succeed.

Russell will be starting the 9th grade in a couple of weeks. Unfortunately, the charter school only goes through 8th grade and Russell will be forced to acclimate to the Fall River public school system again at the same time that he is acclimating to the new pressures of high school. This is going to be an incredibly stressful and difficult time for Russell. I can't imagine how he will get through this period without his mother. I know that without Carla, Russell's performance in school will surely suffer, and I fear that the loss of his mother may push Russell to harm himself in other ways.

In addition to being a single mother to Russell, Carla has taken on a great deal of responsibility in caring for her parents. Carla's father suffered a severe heart attack several years ago, lost oxygen to his brain during the heart attack, and suffered brain damage as a result. Carla's father is often confused and needs help with taking his medicine and getting to adult day care. Carla's mother has diabetes and frequently has trouble remembering things when her blood sugar is low. Carla's mother and father depend on her to take care of them physically and to help with chores around the house, which neither of them can do.

Although Carla's sister often helps out with their parents, Carla has more direct care knowledge and is better qualified to take care of them.

Not only is Carla a devoted mother and caretaker of her sick parents, but she has done everything in her power to hold a fulltime job throughout Russell's life. For nine years, Carla has been a personal care assistant. She worked for many years taking care of HIV positive and AIDS patients. It is amazing to me that she can work in such a high-stress job and still have energy make sure that Russell completes his homework and gets to sports practices.

I have two children of my own with my husband. In addition to our two kids, we also have two of Paul and Carla's brother, TJ's, kids living with us. Both of TJ's kids have severe emotional and psychological issues. Both were physically and sexually abused in their prior home and one of the children is a sex offender. Both children are defiant and verbally abusive. I know that it would be very difficult for Russell to cope with the day-today stress of being around TJ's children if Russell came to live in our house. My husband and I have also decided that if Carla is sentenced to time in prison we will take responsibility for caring for Carla and Paul's mother and father. My husband and I have our hands full now, I don't know how we will manage taking care of Russell and my in-laws.

It has always been very important to Carla that she succeed in breaking the cycle of dysfunction in which she was raised. Carla is a good mother and has managed to raise Russell in a far more loving and healthy environment than the one she was raised in. I honestly believe that if Carla is sent to jail, Russell will suffer tremendously and the cycle will repeat itself. Russell desperately needs his mother. Carla is an incredibly determined woman of integrity. I know she made a mistake but I believe that she has learned from it and regrets her choices each and every day. I respectfully request the Court not sentence Carla to time in prison.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debbie Paiva".

Debbie Paiva
948 Elsbree Street
Fall River, MA 02720
(508) 672-2978